

UNTF

Union of Nontenure-Track Faculty at Michigan State University Local 1855 AFT, AFL-CIO

New UNTF Board Members!

This semester the Union of Nontenure-track Faculty welcomes two new chairs:

- Chair of Communications Committee- **Carmen DeLorenzo**, Romance and Classical Studies
- Chair of Organizing Committee- **Kate Birdsall**, Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures

Together, we are working on plans to reach out to as many people as possible in the UNTF, activate membership, and create more visibility for the union on MSU campus. We feel that instituting a culture of teamwork and union identity will be beneficial to the functioning of the UNTF, as well as create lines of communication between members. Both Carmen and Kate have experience with organizing and outreach, and offer very personable approaches to union work. We look forward to reaching out to departments that we may have missed previously, and finding new people to participate.

In order for us to achieve this goal, however, we will need participation from membership! If you are interested in helping us reach out to different departments, talk to new faculty and staff, or even just want a union t shirt or sticker to show your support, please contact the Organizer, and we will make that happen!

Congratulations to Kate and Carmen on winning their chair positions, we look forward to working together to grow the UNTF and get to know more of our membership!

Designation B Appts

Recently it has come to the attention of the UNTF that some appointment offers for Designation B members have been issued for 1 year terms. We are unsure as to why this happened, and assume it was an innocent mistake. The UNTF has already met with Academic HR to discuss this issue, and a remedy is being sought.

In our Collective Bargaining Agreement with MSU, Designation B appointments are to be at least 3 years, and rolling. This gives you more job security and allows you to plan your life accordingly. If you are Designation B and receive an appointment offer that is less than 3 years, please contact the UNTF and copy us on your appointment letter.

Organizer Update

I am happy to say that I have continued to have the opportunity to meet many faculty members at MSU, and since then, our membership has grown.

For us to continue to grow together and become a stronger union, we need to make the effort to ask our colleagues to join us in being union members. I would like to see our numbers continue to grow!

Remember, we are infinitely stronger together than we are individually, so keep encouraging one another!

Whitney Dziurka,
Organizer for UNTF

Fixed Term Des B vs. Continuing : What You Should Know

Sometimes fixed term teaching faculty or academic staff are approached about converting to Specialist-Teaching Continuing. This option can be confusing. There are pros and cons for making such a change.

At one time almost all MSU faculty were tenure track. The classification of Specialist was created at MSU in 1959, and did not require a terminal degree. It is not considered faculty, but rather academic staff. Having this classification allowed a place for individuals with Masters. Fixed term teaching specialists are in the UNTF.

The Specialist classification did not have the security of tenure, and at some point the option of “continuing” status was developed. This meant that after 6 years of probation the employee no longer had an end date. This gave Master level academic positions some job security since they could not get tenure. The option of continuing status has not been extended to other classifications. Teaching specialists continuing are not represented by the UNTF.

As we all know the use of fixed term faculty and academic staff exploded at MSU and around the country. For many years the Specialist continuing classification was one of the only ways for fixed term faculty to gain job security. A fixed term Assistant Professor could, by converting to Specialist, gain some job security after 6 years. To get this security the Assistant Professor would have to give up their faculty rank and become academic staff but the trade-off for security was often worth it.

When fixed term teaching faculty and academic staff organized and created the UNTF, one of the first gains was the establishment of Designation B. This oddly named status allows another path to job security. A fixed term teaching faculty or academic staff is eligible for Designation B after teaching 10 semesters (usually 5 years). Designation B employees are given a 3 year appointment with a rolling end date. So while there is an end date, the employee doesn't reach it because it moves out a year each year. This makes it comparable to the “continuing” status that some Specialists get. There is now an alternative to “continuing” status; Designation B.

It's an individual choice as to whether to accept or seek converting to Specialist-Teaching Continuing.

- If you are currently faculty (Professor/Associate Professor/Assistant Professor) you will have to give up your rank. In some departments Specialists are treated like faculty, in others less so. The University governance system has specific policy on the role of academic staff.
- The UNTF probation period is 2 semesters. Most employees who convert to Specialist-Teaching Continuing have to serve a new 6 year probation period.
- Continuing has no end date. Designation B has an end date that you never reach.
- Designation B teaching faculty and academic staff are covered by the UNTF contract and its protections. Specialist-teaching are covered by the contract. Continuing Specialists are not. If a UNTF member moves to a continuing specialist position, the UNTF can no longer represent that person or bargain on their behalf. Continuing Specialists are eligible for raises from the general pool, not the fixed term teaching pool.

The MSU employment tracks (tenure/continuing/fixed term/fixed term Designation B) evolved over years. Some of the distinctions make sense, others are historical. The UNTF was formed in large part to gain job security for the teaching faculty and academic staff at MSU. Some will find that security in the Continuing Specialist position. Some will seek Designation B. If you want more information about these options, please contact the UNTF office.

No Fall Appointment? Unemployment Insurance Might Help

While fixed term teaching faculty and academic staff at MSU have more job security than ever, many are not given assurance of employment next fall. So far 154 have been told that their position is not expected to be continued in the fall. Normally academics are not eligible for unemployment insurance in the summer but they are if the employer has not given assurance of fall employment.

Michigan has a 4 step process for employees to apply for Unemployment Benefits. These benefits begin the same week you file, so filing our claim during your first week of unemployment (starting the day you received your non-renewal letter) is important.

Why should I file?

Filing for Unemployment Insurance Benefits helps the UNTF convince the University to give longer and more frequent appointments, which increases job security and encourages dignity in the workplace. The University could easily avoid having to pay benefits to faculty by offering reasonable assurance of work in the following semester, and offering longer appointments. This sends a message to the University that short-term contingent appointments are not beneficial to faculty or their families.

When applying for Unemployment Insurance Benefits you:

1. File your claim online
2. Register in person at your nearest Michigan Works!
3. Log job searches and submit online once per month
4. Go online (or call) every two weeks



Be prepared when you file, you will need:

1. Your social security number
2. Your State-issued picture license or driver's license
3. The names and addresses of ALL employers you worked for in the past 18 months, as well as quarterly gross earnings
4. The last date of employment with each employer
5. Your most recent employer's or Federal ID number (we can help you with this).

If you are not a U.S. citizen you will also need your Alien Registration Number, and the expiration date of your work authorization. For more information on what you need to file a claim, please ask, or visit www.michigan.gov/document/uia/1299_7-22-14_463594_7.pdf

You may either file a claim online at www.michigan.gov, and set up an online account 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by telephone. If you choose to call, you can reach the UIA at 1-866-500-0017. If you choose to sign up online, wait 2 days, and call to check on your application. If you receive a questionnaire, be sure to tell the call center employee you “have no reasonable assurance of work”, and “MSU is not on a school break.” Be diligent with the Unemployment Insurance office, they are understaffed and currently having issues with their automated system.

After filing your claim, be sure to go to your nearest Michigan Works! location within 72 hours, or 3 business days, to continue the process. If you choose to file online, check your account often for updates and create hard copies of all communications. You may be mailed a questionnaire, which you get 10 days to answer. If you miss your 10 day window you could be flagged for fraud. If you do get flagged for fraud, you will need hard copies of your communications to prove your case.

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Teaching in Multiple Departments

Some members have asked how to apply for teaching in multiple departments, if any procedure around such application exists, and how one finds information on availability for teaching positions in other departments. While there is no policy around this procedure, with the help of Academic HR we have come up with some suggestions for faculty looking to expand their availability to other departments.

First, narrow your search to departments applicable to your training and education. After you have winnowed your search, check the HR website for listings in applicable areas.

<https://jobs.msu.edu/applicants/jsp/shared/frameset/Frameset.jsp?time=1464105192664>

It is recommended faculty and academic staff also contact the Chairs in the department(s) they are interested in via email, or by scheduling an appointment. It is best to speak face to face to introduce yourself and offer availability. Establishing personal-professional connections is important, and may help you get your foot in the door.

Check with your department to see if you or anyone you know has connections within the department you would like to work in. Sometimes your Chair, friend, or mentor may know someone or have useful information to give you. Do what you can and try to not be too pushy or assuming. You may not get the job upon first applying, but at least now your interest is known. Good luck on your job search!

Unemployment Insurance Continued....

If you get a “yes” determination, that is great! You can either choose a debit card, or elect to have your benefits put in your bank through direct deposit. If you choose the debit option, be sure to keep your card in a safe place when your benefits are done, you will need the same card if you receive benefits again. You will also receive a confirmation number that you should notate. If you receive a “no” determination, please do not panic. Call us at the UNTF immediately, we have resources to help guide you, as well as access to a few Unemployment Attorneys who work free of charge.

After you begin to receive benefits, the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency requires all claimants to conduct a continuous work search for each week they claim unemployment benefits. You must report your record of work search at least once a month by either submitting information online at www.michigan.gov/uia, submitting form 1583, Monthly Record of Work Search via mail or fax, or appear at a Michigan Works! agency location to file a work search form.

Although this process is confusing, and sometimes frustrating, we encourage you to apply. This is an important resource we have, and are entitled to take advantage of. In your contract, Article 15, I., D., 1. states “There shall be no guarantee of employment, nor should there be any expectation of continued employment, beyond the specific appointment end date.” This is the University telling us we are temporary, and our way of telling them we deserve more is to use these resources. For more information, or to arrange a small group session, please contact the UNTF office.



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